

A SEA-DYAK TRADITION OF THE DELUGE AND CONSEQUENT EVENTS.

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Once upon a time some Dyak women went to gather young bamboo shoots to eat. Having got the shoots, they went along the jungle, and came upon what they took to be a large tree fallen to the ground; upon this they sat, and began to pare the bamboo shoots, when, to their utter amazement, the tree began to bleed. At this point some men came upon the scene, and at once saw that what the women were sitting upon was not a tree, but a huge boa-constrictor in a state of stupor. The men killed the beast, cut it up, and took the flesh home to eat. As they were frying the pieces of snake, strange noises came from the pan, and, at the same time, it began to rain furiously. The rain continued until all hills, except the highest, were covered, and the world was drowned because the men killed and fried the snake. All mankind perished, except one woman, who fled to a very high mountain. There she found a dog lying at the foot of a jungle creeper, and feeling the root of the creeper to be warm she thought perhaps fire might be got out of it, so she took two pieces of its wood and rubbed them together and obtained fire; and thus arose the fire-drill, and the first production of fire after the great flood.

This woman and the fire-drill, to which they attribute the qualities of a living being, gave birth to Simpang-impang; who, as the name implies, had only half a body, one eye, one ear, half a nose, one cheek, one arm, one leg. It appears that many of the animal creation found refuge in the highest mountains during the flood. A certain rat, more thoughtful than the rest of his friends, had contrived to preserve a handful of padi, but by some means not told, Simpang got knowledge of this, and stole it from the rat;

and thus man got padi after the flood. Simpang spread his handful of padi upon a leaf and set it upon a tree-stump to dry, but a puff of wind came and away went padi, leaf and all. Simpang was enraged at this, and set off to inflict a fine upon the Spirit of the Winds, and to demand the restoration of the padi. Going through the upper regions, he passed the houses of Puntang Raga and Ensang Pengaia, who asked Simpang to inquire of the Wind Spirit the reason why one plantain or sugar-cane planted in the ground only grew up one single plant, never producing any further increase. After this Simpang came to a lake who told him to ask the Wind Spirit why it was it had no mouth and could not empty itself. Then he came to a very high tree whereon all kinds of birds were gathered together and would not fly away. They had taken refuge there at the deluge. The tree sends a message to the Wind Spirit, "Tell the Spirit to blow me down; how can I live with all these birds on my top baulking every effort to put forth a leaf or branch in any direction?" On goes Simpang until he arrives at the house of the Spirit; he goes up the ladder and sits on the verandah. "Well," says the Spirit, "and what do you want?" "I am come to demand payment for the padi which you blew away from the stump on which I had set it to dry." "I refuse," replies the Spirit, "however let us try the matter by diving." So they went to the water, the Spirit and his friends, and Simpang and his friends. Simpang's friends were certain beasts, birds, and fishes which he had induced to follow him on the way. Simpang himself could not dive a bit; but it is allowable in such a case to get a substitute, and Simpang persuaded a fish to act for him, who dived, and beat the Wind Spirit. But the Spirit proposed another ordeal. "Let us jump over the house," says the Spirit. Simpang would have been vanquished here had not the swallow jumped for him, and of course cleared the Spirit's house. "Once more," says the Spirit, "Let us see who can get through the hole of a sumpitan." This time Simpang got the ant to act for him, and so held his own against the Spirit. But as each performed the ordeal required, the matter was not yet decided, and the Spirit declared he would not make any compensation. "Then," says Simpang in a rage, "I will burn your house down about your ears." "Burn it if you can," says the

Spirit. Now Simpang had brought the fire-drill with him, and he threw it on to the roof of the Spirit's house which flamed up into a blaze at once. The great Spirit fumed, and raged and stamped, and only added fury to fire. He soon bethought himself of submitting, and shouted out: "Oh, Simpang, call your fire-drill back, and I will pay for the padi." He recalled the fire-drill, and the flames ceased. Then there was a discussion, and the Spirit said: "I have no goods or money wherewith to pay you; but from this time forth you shall be a whole man, having two eyes, two ears, two cheeks, two arms, two legs." Simpang was quite satisfied with this, and said no more about the padi. Simpang then gave the messages with which he had been instructed on the way, and the Spirit made answer: "The reason why Puntang Raga and Ensang Pengaia are not successful with their sugar-canes and plantains is that they follow no proper customs. Tell them never to mention the names of their father-in-law, or mother-in-law, and never to walk before them; not to marry near relations, nor to have two wives, and the plantains and sugar-canes will produce the usual increase. The reason why the lake cannot empty itself is that there is gold where the mouth ought to be. Take that away and it will have an exit. The tree I will look after." The tree fell by the wind, the lake found an exit, and the world went on as before. But how padi was recovered does not appear; but completeness and consistency must never be expected in Dyak myths.

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